

What is claimed is:

- 1     1.     A method for streaming a media file over a distributed information system to a  
2     client computer running a browser application, the method comprising the steps of:  
3         receiving a request for a particular media file from a client computer,  
4         providing a metafile, whereby said metafile contains information about the  
5     identification, location and format of the media file,  
6         returning said metafile back to said client computer,  
7     characterized in that  
8         the step of receiving a request for a particular media file from a client computer  
9     further comprises the steps of :  
10        intercepting a download request for the actual media file and  
11        reinterpreting said download request in a request for receiving a corresponding  
12     metafile.
- 1     2.     The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of reinterpreting said  
2     download request includes the step of deriving information about said corresponding  
3     metafile from a portion of the URL.
- 1     3.     The method according to claim 2, wherein said portion of the URL is the file  
2     extension of the requested media file.
- 1     4.     The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of providing a metafile  
2     comprises the steps of:  
3         dynamically generating a metafile, and  
4         statically querying a metafile.
- 1     5.     The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of reinterpreting said  
2     download request includes the step of:  
3         checking predefined filter criteria determining of whether or not a metafile is to  
4     be returned instead of the requested media file.

1 6. The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of providing a metafile further  
2 includes the step of retrieving information about the configuration of at least one item  
3 chosen from the group comprising: version of the streaming product, type of the  
4 streaming product, location of the media file, load of the servers, load of the network,  
5 location of the client, quality of service.

1 7. The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of providing a metafile further  
2 includes the step of reading information about the client's preferred streaming format and  
3 forming a metafile in accordance with the client's preference.

1 8. A device for streaming a media file over a network, the device comprising:  
2 a network interface for communicating to a web client,  
3 an HTTP protocol handler for handling HTTP requests and  
4 means for providing metadata for initiating the streaming of a media file,  
5 wherein said metadata is returned to said web client in response to a request for  
6 said media file.

1 9. The device according to claim 8, wherein the means for providing metadata is  
2 formed by a metadata generator.

1 10. The device according to claim 8, wherein the means for providing metadata is  
2 formed by a metadata query component.

1 11. A computer-readable program stored on a computer-readable medium, said  
2 computer readable program being configured to perform the steps of:  
3 receiving a request for a particular media file from a client computer,  
4 providing a metafile, whereby said metafile contains information about the  
5 identification, location and format of the media file,  
6 returning said metafile back to said client computer,  
7 characterized in that  
8 the step of receiving a request for a particular media file from a client computer  
9 further comprises the steps of :  
10 intercepting a download request for the actual media file and  
11 reinterpreting said download request in a request for receiving a corresponding  
12 metafile.

1 12. The computer-readable program of claim 11, wherein the step of reinterpreting  
2 said download request includes the step of deriving information about said corresponding  
3 metafile from any portion of the URL.

1 13. The computer-readable program of claim 12, wherein said portion of the URL is  
2 the file extension of the requested media file.

1 14. The computer-readable program of claim 11, wherein the step of providing a  
2 metafile comprises the steps of:  
3 dynamically generating a metafile, and  
4 statically querying a metafile.

1 15. The computer-readable program of claim 11, wherein the step of reinterpreting  
2 said download request includes the step of:  
3 checking predefined filter criteria determining of whether or not a metafile is to  
4 be returned instead of the requested media file.

1 16. The computer readable program of claim 11, wherein the step of providing a  
2 metafile further includes the step of retrieving information about the configuration of at  
3 least one item chosen from the group comprising: version of the streaming product, type  
4 of the streaming product, location of the media file, load of the servers, load of the  
5 network, location of the client, quality of service.

1 17. The computer readable program of claim 11, wherein the step of providing a  
2 metafile further includes the step of reading information about the client's preferred  
3 streaming format and forming a metafile in accordance with the client's preference.